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SUBJECT: BURUNDI DEADLOCK IN PARLIAMENT

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[B](#). BUJUMBURA 538
[C](#). BUJUMBURA 543

[1](#). (SBU) Summary. Burundi's Diplomatic Community issued a press statement July 31 addressing the deadlock in the Burundian National Assembly, and the deterioration of negotiations with the FNL, calling on all political actors in Burundi to place national interests above individual ones. Speaking on behalf of the diplomatic corps, Tanzanian Ambassador Francis Mndolwa, Dean of Burundi's Diplomatic Corps, presented the statement to the media, reminding all parties that "power is best exercised when bearing in mind one's responsibilities." At the end of the question and answer session following the press statement, Ambassador Mndolwa stated that he did not know the whereabouts of FNL rebel leader Agathon Rwasa. While assuring that Rwasa was not in Dar-Es-Salaam, Ambassador Mndolwa opined that Burundian refugee camps served as good hideouts for the FNL, and perhaps the FNL would be more easily identified in Burundi if the camps were shut down. End Summary.

[2](#). (U) Special Representative for the Secretary General (SRSG) to the UN Integrated Mission in Burundi (BINUB), Youssef Mahmoud, along with Ambassador Mamadou Bah of the African Union (AU), and Tanzanian Ambassador Francis Mndolwa issued to the Burundian media a public statement addressing, in large part, the current political deadlock in Burundi's National Assembly. The press statement was presented during a July 31 press conference held at BINUB headquarters in Bujumbura. It also addressed the deteriorating condition of negotiations between the Government of Burundi (GOB) and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL (FNL) in plans to implement the 2006 Cease-Fire Agreement, following last week's departure of the FNL delegation from talks in Bujumbura. (Reftels A and B)

[3](#). (U) Directly before Ambassador Mndolwa's presentation of the statement, SRSG Mahmoud told the assembled media and diplomatic corps that BINUB's aim through the statement was to comment on the recent withdrawal of the FNL from negotiations. He pointed out that the UN played a supporting role in the peace initiative, led by South Africa, between the GOB and the FNL. Mr. Mahmoud said that the Secretary General urged the two parties not to resume hostilities, and welcomed the assistance of South Africa and the AU in the negotiations.

Press Statement Calls for Unity

[4](#). (U) Ambassador Mndolwa, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Burundi, read the combined press statement in which he expressed concern, on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps, over

the political situation in Burundi. He commended Burundi for its return to democracy after elections in 2005, and called on the government and the people of Burundi "to continue implementing the requisites of democracy and the rule of law." In the statement, Ambassador Mndolwa pointed out the importance of dialogue between political parties and within the parliament, and said that national interests must come before individual gains. He reminded that the Parliament is a vital necessity for the government to work, and "should not be bypassed or abused by any party."

15. (U) Through the press statement Mndolwa called upon the FNL to continue talks aimed at implementing the 2006 Cease-Fire Agreement, saying that Burundians were best-qualified to solve the problems of Burundi. He closed the statement by asking all parties to remember that "power is best exercised when bearing in mind one's responsibilities."

Question and Answers Generate Some Heat

16. (U) In a question and answer session following the press statement, African Public Radio questioned the role of BINUB and the AU in breaking the deadlock currently plaguing the National Assembly. (Reftel C) Mr. Mahmoud pointed out BINUB's lack of a mandate to intervene in the internal working of the GOB, and called on the media to assist in getting out a message endorsing reconciliation. AU Ambassador Bah singled out the quiet assistance of the Diplomatic community in searching for solutions to Burundi's political crisis, but cautioned the media that, "you can bring a horse to water, but you can't make him drink", stating that "if Burundi won't drink the water, we (the

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international community) can't make it do so."

17. (SBU) Ambassador Mndolwa's response to the same question caused a considerable stir. He pointed out that Burundi is facing hard times, and opined that international assistance "will not be here forever." He said "Burundi, you waste time quarreling over trivial matters," asking what benefit did "powersharing" convey in developing an economy. He chastised the media, telling it, as Mahmoud had, that it should educate the people of Burundi about their exigent needs, rather than "joining other political parties." He continued, claiming that today developing countries "cannot even control their own economies" - that they are controlled by outsiders, a comment which perplexed his listeners. He ended by saying "I'm African; I can say what these other Ambassadors can not."

18. (SBU) The final question from the media was, bluntly, "Where are the FNL rebel leaders?" Ambassador Mndolwa took the lead in answering, and again, said forcefully that he did not know the whereabouts of FNL leader Agathon Rwasa, but stated flatly that Rwasa is not in Dar-Es-Salaam. Mndolwa continued, referring to Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania, saying that he "would like to kick them all out, but the international community says no." He called the camps good hideouts for the FNL, and said that if Tanzania closed them, perhaps the FNL would be easier to identify in Burundi.

19. (SBU) Comment. The Diplomatic Corps wants to speak with one voice on the matter of political dissension in Burundi's parliament and the on-going negotiations between the GOB and the FNL. Frustrations at the political deadlock in Parliament and the disappearance of FNL interlocutors was evident in the response of AU Ambassador Bah and in Ambassador Mndolwa's exasperated candor. It has been almost two years since the formation of the government, and a year since the signing of the cease-fire agreement. It should come as no surprise if the international community, which welcomed Burundi's new democracy with patience and assistance, begins to show its impatience with the lack of

progress. Individually and jointly. members of the diplomatic community are delivering strong messages urging responsible leaders to step up their dialogue and find a way forward. End Comment.

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